atwood

Bacteriology Department
Melbourne University
Carlton N3, Vic.,
Australia

September 13, 1957

Dear Kim and Barbee:

Greetings from Australia. This must have been the only part of the western Pacific that you didn't get to see during the whirlwind last spring. We hope everything is going well now with all of you and with the lastborn.

It would be hard to give you much colorful news of the world down here. Australia nowadays is a long ways from the bushmen and the kangaroos and the platypi, though to tell the truth, these all exist, and we are trying our best to get into the country andsee some of them. Melbourne is a sprawling city of over a million, something of a hybridbetween Edinburgh and Philadelphia in its flavor. We have a rather plush flat in the fashionable neighborhood of 'South Yarra', overlooking the Yarra "River" and facing the municipal skyline. It is rather shockingly expensive, but the best we good do on and for short notice. We will be down here as you know till the end of next month. Our plans for November are indecisive, but we will certainly be back home by end-November, andpossibly a few weeks sooner.

The main point of my writing is to let you know informally that the machinery at Madison a propos your appointment has by no means stopped turning, though it was necessarily slowed down over the summer. In fact, all substantial formalities have been completed, including the approval of your faculty status both in the Genetics and the Medical Genetics departments. The only significant hurdle now is the assurance of funds, and Dean Bowers and I have no serious doubt that thiswill be forthcoming, quite possibly within the next few weeks. If this works out as well as I can reasonably hope, you will be receiving a formal tender from Bowers before too long. I am sure that you are not going to make any decision lightly, and you know well enough my own hopes in this direction. The terms of any proposal shouldbe at least as favorable as those we have already discussed. To my own mind, this is really a marvelous opportunity, both for Wisconsin and yourself, too good to turn down lightly.

So, when the matter comes to fruition, I hope you will let me know most candidly of any remediable obstacles.

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Our trip here can't have been as novel an experience as yours, but we did have quite a good time at Hawaii, Fiji and the Barrier Reef before settling down. Much of August was spent in touring and lecturing. Since the beginning of the month, we have been settled here in Melbourne, and I have actually been getting down to some experimental work here at Burnet's institute. His own interests are veering rather sharply towards somatic genetics and the mechanism of antibody production; he is toying now with the idea, for example, that the antibody response is the selective increase of one particular species of lymphocyte which already exists (and accounts for 'natural antibody'). My own predilections are for a subcellular dynamics. The hard nut to crack is how induced tolerance achieves the loss of potency to produce a given antibody on the part of every cell in the treated host, without the presence of a humoral factor. Burnet would account for this by the prenatal suppression of the corresponding clone of cells, which is quite a clever notion. I haven't been able to formulate a better one that doesn't conflict with the facts, especially since neither induced tolerance, nor the lack of it, seems to be passively transmissible.

My own work here has been on flu virus. I've been riding herd on the hypothesis that "incomplete virus" may be the yield from a cell whose surface has been altered (either by excess virus or RDE or periodate), the particles themselves thereby having a defective skin; damage to contained RNA would be consequent. This seems to be consistent with most of the data (ignoring a few embarrassing features that none of the theories seem to be able to cope with.) But it is something of a problem to design a really new experiment; everytime I think of something, it's been done, and is usually consistent with this particular approach. I haven't got to doing any recombination experiments, mainly for still trying to think of some better markers.

Best regards,

Joshua Lederberg